

COMMENTS UPON THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE  
JEWS AND CHRISTIANS.

BOOK OF NUMBERS....CHAPTER XXXI.

*Conflagration, debauchery, and murder, of the most ferocious kind.*

IN the first 18 verses of this chapter, we are presented with the gradations and the climax of Jewish rascality. The Hebrew Divinity, the Jewish Jehovah, has also covered himself all over with malignant and murdering glory, and completed, in the most detestable manner, the savage brutality of his character. His unjust, his cruel and bloody commands, mark the conduct of a barbarian, and describe the character of an unrelenting tyrant. The chosen band second the rapacity of their God, and heaven and earth combine in acts of horrid cruelty, against innocence and virtue. The greatest Christian fanatic on earth, is challenged to offer any thing like a reasonable apology for the abominable wickedness exhibited in this chapter. Ye heated and persecuting advocates of revelation, ye followers of the meek and humble Jesus, you are invited, you are called upon, by the voice of truth and humanity, to read and contemplate this extraordinary portion of *holy writ*. Here it is, ready for your perusal :

“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites : afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the Lord of Midian. Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas, the son of Eleazer the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand. And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses ; and they slew all the males. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain ; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian : Balaam also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle : and all their flocks, and all their goods. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles with fire. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. And they brought the captives and the prey, and the spoil unto Moses and Eleazer the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan, near Jericho. And Moses, and Eleazer the priest, and all the princes of the congregation, went forth to meet them

without the camp. And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds which came from the battle. And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves."

This shocking mandate will tarnish forever the character of Moses, and the God whom he adored. The whole passage is destitute of all the features of genuine morality; it possesses none of the characteristics of individual or national justice; it sinks the character of the Bible below the murdering histories of ancient or modern Alexanders, and leaves the human mind to contemplate, with extreme disgust, the savage brutality of the Jewish Jehovah, and his chosen people. We demand most pointedly of believers in revelation, an answer to this question—are not the ideas contained in the 17th and 18th verses, inconsistent with justice, decency, humanity, and divine perfection? The married women were all to be murdered; the male children were all to be murdered; and the unmarried women were all to be kept alive for the purposes of debauchery, in the hands of unrelenting enemies, who had murdered their mothers, their brothers, and their nearest relations! Great God! this is not thy book...it is a book of wickedness and fanaticism; it is a book of murder, conflagration and carnage. It is a book of the most detestable debauchery; and if superstition had not hardened the heart of man, and annihilated his moral temperament, he would be ashamed to call such dreadful wickedness a revelation from the supreme Creator of the universe.

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#### HUMAN SCIENCE, THE FATE OF NATIONS, THE ULTIMATE DESTINY OF THE WORLD.

VOLNEY, Condorcet, and many other modern writers and philosophers, have displayed the energy of their faculties, and developed the great resources of genius, in attempting to solve the following question:

"Will the human race ever be in a better condition than at present?"

The powers, activity, zeal, and benevolence, which have been exhibited upon this question by philosophic philanthropists, will cover them with immortal honour, and transmit their names to posterity, as the exalted benefactors of mankind. The light of history, presents facts, and anticipated conjectures, analogically formed upon the basis of all human experience, must become the ground of decision in the present case. In the intercourse with mankind, there is much to be apprehended from the ignorance, interest, timidity, and ill-nature of those on whom the ultimate destiny of nations depends.

It is lamentable to observe, that ignorance is always inverting its



negative and obstinate powers upon self, and throwing millions of obstacles in the way of human improvement. Interest also raises her objections, and vociferates against every species of change, because, if in the act of producing a great change, vastly beneficial to mankind, avarice should lose a single cent, we should never hear the last of it. Timidity, likewise, mean and lurking timidity, although made up of dastardly cowardice, has the impudence to tumble into the common stock of objections, the trembling anxieties essential to its character. Ill-nature, at last, comes in with her colossal strength, and crowns the immoral phalanx, destined to bury, in one common grave, the energies and the felicity of the human species. One of the first attributes of philosophic philanthropy, is, that of patient perseverance in well doing; the impatient and the irascible temperament, that expects every thing to be accomplished in a day, will seldom labour in the cause of humanity more than a day, because disappointment forms the basis of recession, and malevolent inactivity. It is the office of cultivated reason to give new life to desponding mortals! The Printing Press, as we have before observed, is the moral lever for elevating human improvement, and republican liberty is the fulcrum on which it rests. Ignorance, superstition, and political tyranny, are the ponderous bodies to be raised; while reason, active, energetic, and immortal reason, is the only power that can seize upon the end of the lever, and produce the consolatory effect to ignorant and unhappy man. The slow progress of human science, forms a ground of discouragement to some of the advocates for the general improvement and ultimate emancipation of the nations of the earth. The nature and the character of the human mind, and the obstacles which have been thrown in the way of its operation, sufficiently account for that slow progress so injurious to individual and national happiness; but the means of promoting human science at the present time, are such as nothing can destroy, though temporary causes may diminish the hopes, and tarnish the brilliant prospects, of the enlightened and the benevolent friends of the human race.

*(To be continued.)*

## OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE EGYPTIANS.

*(Continued from page 88.)*

In the fictitious sciences of astrology and magic, there can be no doubt that the Egyptians were adepts. Their priests were not negligent in cultivating arts, which would give them such an irresistible sway over an ignorant and superstitious populace. Diodorus Siculus relates, that the Chaldeans learned these arts from the Egyptians, which he could not have asserted, had there not been at least a general tradition that they were practised, from the earliest times, in Egypt. One of the most ancient sects of the Magi, as the Mosaic history informs us, was among the Egyptians. These Magi made use of small images, of various forms, with which they pretended to perform many wonders, and particularly to cure diseases. The image of Harpocrates, an astronomical divinity, who seems to have personified the

return of the sun at the winter-solstice, and who was represented in the form of a young infant, was hung from the neck, or worn in a ring upon the finger, as an amulet.

Before we attempt to approach the mysteries of the Egyptian theology, or philosophy (for, in speaking of ancient times, these cannot be separated) we must remark, that it was two kinds; the one exoteric, addressed to the vulgar; the other esoteric, confined to a select number of the priests, and to those who possessed, or were to possess, the regal power. The mysterious nature of their concealed doctrine was symbolically expressed by images of sphinxes placed at the entrance of their temples. It must also be recollected, that in different cities of Egypt, and in different colleges of priests, different tenets prevailed. Of this Juvenal furnishes an example, in his account of a quarrel between the inhabitants of Tentyra and Ombri, two neighbouring districts in Egypt, concerning the crocodile; the Tentyriteans being accustomed to worship this formidable animal, and the Ombrians to kill it wherever they found it. That these disputes were not confined to the popular superstitions, appears from the different and contradictory accounts, which were given by the Egyptian priests themselves of the origin and history of their divinities.

The exoteric religion of the Egyptians is universally known to have consisted in the grossest and most irrational superstitions. It could only be on account of the strictness with which the populace adhered to these, that Herodotus speaks of them as the most religious of men. Besides gods, heroes, and eminent men, they worshipped various kinds animals and plants.

At Rome, the Egyptian superstitions were thought so pernicious, that, under the consulship of Piso and Gabinius, the public worship of their gods was prohibited: and in the reign of Tiberius the observance of Egyptian rites was suppressed, and those who were infected with this superstition were required to burn their sacred vestments, and other articles employed in their ceremonies.

The most probable account of the origin of the Egyptian superstitions is, that those natural bodies, which were at first introduced into their religious rites merely as emblems, or symbols, of invisible divinities, became themselves, in process of time, objects of worship.

Concerning the esoteric, or philosophical doctrine of the Egyptians, it seems evident, in the first place, that they conceived matter to be the first principle of things, and that before the regular forms of nature arose, an eternal chaos had existed, which had contained, in a state of darkness and confusion, all the materials of future beings. This chaos, which was also called Night, was, in the most ancient times, worshipped as one of the superior divinities. Aristotle speaks of Chaos and Night as one and the same, and as the first principle, from which, in the ancient cosmogonies, all things are derived. It is probable that the Egyptians worshipped the material principle, Chaos, or Night, under the name of Athor; a word, which in the Coptic language signifies *night*. This divinity the Grecian mythologists, after their usual manner, confounded with Venus. Hesychius refers to a temple in Egypt dedicated to the nocturnal Venus. And Herodotus relates, that in the city of Atarbechis, was a temple sacred to Venus; whence it may be inferred, that long before the time of Herodotus, Ator, or the



Egyptian Venus, denoting the material principle, was an object of worship. Of this divinity the symbol, which after their usual manner, the Egyptians placed in her temple, was a cow. That the passive principle in nature was thus admitted to a primary place in the philosophy and theology of the Egyptians is confirmed by Diogenes Laertius, who says, that the Egyptians taught, that matter is the first principle, and that from this the four elements are separated, and certain animals produced.

Besides the material principle, it seems capable of satisfactory proof, that the Egyptians admitted an active principle or intelligent power, eternally united with the chaotic mass, by whose energy the elements were separated, and bodies were formed, and who continually presides over the universe, and is the efficient cause of all effects. For this we have not only the authority of Plutarch, who may be suspected of having exhibited the Egyptian philosophy in a Grecian dress, but the united testimony of many writers, who give such accounts of the Egyptian gods, Phthas or Vulcan, and Cneph or Agathodæmon, as render it probable that these were only different names, expressing different attributes of the supreme divinity. "The Egyptians," says Eusebius, "call the maker of the universe by the name of Cneph, and relate, that he sent forth an egg from his mouth; which, in their symbolical language, denotes that he produced the universe." Diodorus Siculus speaks of the Egyptian Vulcan as the first king among the gods, and Manetho ascribes to him unlimited duration, and perpetual splendor. The name itself, Phthas, in the Coptic language, denotes one by whom events are ordained. When the Egyptians meant to represent the ruler of the world as good, they called him by the appellation Cneph; a word which denotes a good genius. They represented him under the symbol of a serpent. Upon a temple dedicated to Neitha, at Sais, the chief town in Lower Egypt, was this inscription, "I am whatever is, or has been, or will be, and no mortal has hitherto drawn aside my veil; my offspring is the sun." Both Plutarch and Proclus mention this inscription, though with some difference of language: and it is so consonant to the mythological spirit of the Egyptians, that, notwithstanding the silence of more ancient writers who treat of their theology, its authenticity may be easily admitted. If this be allowed, and if, at the same time, it be granted (as the learned Jablonski maintains) that Neitha and Phthas were only different names for the same divinity, this inscription will be a strong confirmation of the opinion, that the Egyptians acknowledged the existence of an active intelligence, the cause of all things, whose nature is incomprehensible. On the whole, notwithstanding what has been advanced in support of the contrary opinion by Porphyry and others, it appears highly probable that the ancient Egyptians acknowledged an active as well as a passive principle in nature, and, as Plutarch asserts, worshipped the supreme Deity.

The doctrine of an ethereal intelligence pervading and animating the material world, appears, among the Egyptians, to have been from the earliest time accompanied with a belief in inferior divinities. Conceiving emanations from the divinity to be resident in various parts of nature, when they saw life, motion, and enjoyment communicated to the inhabitants of the earth from the sun, and, as they supposed, from

other heavenly bodies, they ascribed these effects to the influence of certain divinities, derived from the first deity, which they supposed to inhabit these bodies. Hence arose their worship of the sun, under the names of Osiris, Ammon, and Horus; of the moon, under those of Isis, Bubastis, and Buto; of the Cabiri, or planets; of Sothis, or the Dog-star; and of other celestial divinities. The Cabiri were called by the Egyptian priests sons of Phthas, or Vulcan, that is of the Supreme Being. When the Egyptians worshipped the divinity under the notion of an offended sovereign, they called him Tithrambo, that is, according to the Greeks, Hecate: and the evil principle, from which they conceived themselves liable to misfortune, they deprecated as an object of terror, under the name of Typhon.

From the same source it may be easily conceived that, among the Egyptians as well as in other nations, would arise the worship of deified men. When they saw their illustrious heroes, or legislators, protecting their country by their prowess, or improving human life by useful inventions and institutions, they concluded that a large portion of that divinity, which animates all things, resided in them, and supposed that after their death, the good dæmon that animated them passed into the society of the divinities. In this manner it may be conceived, that the worship of heroes would spring up together with that of the heavenly bodies. But whether the former did in fact prevail among the Egyptians, is a question which has been much disputed, and which, after all that has been advanced upon it, still remains undecided.

The opinion of the Egyptians concerning the human soul is very differently represented by different writers. It is indeed universally agreed, that they believed it to be immortal. Herodotus asserts, tho' perhaps without sufficient ground, that they were the first people who taught this doctrine: and Diodorus Siculus relates, that the Egyptians, instead of lamenting the death of good men, rejoiced in their felicity, conceiving that, in the invisible world, they would live forever among the pious. To the same purport is the account which he gives of the custom of bringing the characters of the deceased under a public trial, and offering up prayers to the gods on behalf of those who were adjudged to have lived virtuously, that they might be admitted into the society of good men. But it has been a subject of debate, into what place, according to the Egyptian doctrine, the souls of men passed after death. Plutarch speaks of the Amenthes of the Egyptians, corresponding to the Hades of the Greeks, a subterraneous region, to which the souls of dead men were conveyed. With this agrees the account given by Diodorus Siculus of the funeral customs of the Egyptians. It is also confirmed by a fact, related by Porphyry, upon the authority of Euphantus, that the Egyptians, at their funerals, offered up this prayer, in the name of the deceased: "Thou sun, who rulest all things, and ye other powers, who give life to man, receive me, and grant me an abode among the immortal gods." Herodotus, on the contrary, gives it as the opinion of the Egyptians, that, when the body decays, the soul passes into some other animal, which is then born; and that after it has made the circuit of beasts, birds, and fishes, through a period of three thousand years, it again becomes an inhabitant of a human body. Diogenes Laertius, after Hecateus, relates, that according to the tenets



of the Egyptians, the soul after death continues to live, and passes into other bodies.

These different notions concerning the state of the soul after death, were probably held by different colleges of priests, some of whom were advocates for the doctrine of transmigration, while others held, that the souls of good men, after wandering for a time among the stars, were permitted to return to the society of the gods. Or, the seeming inconsistency of these opinions may be reconciled by means of a conjecture, which naturally arises from the doctrine, that God is the soul of the world, from which all things came, and to which they will return. According to this doctrine it may be conceived, that all souls, being portions of the universal mind, must return to the divinity; but that since different minds, by their union with the body, are stained with different degrees of impurity, it becomes necessary, that, before their return, they should pass through different degrees of purgation, which might be supposed to be accomplished by means of successive transmigrations. According to this system, bad men would undergo this metempsychosis for a longer, good men for a shorter period; and the Amenthes, or Hades, may be conceived to have been the region, in which departed souls, immediately after death, received their respective designations.

As the Egyptians held, that the world was produced from chaos by the energy of an intelligent principle, so they conceived, that there is in nature a continual tendency towards dissolution. In Plato's *Timæus*, an Egyptian priest is introduced, describing the destruction of the world, and asserting that it will be effected by means of water and fire. They conceived that the universe undergoes a periodical conflagration, after which all things are restored to their original form, to pass again through a similar succession of changes.

#### OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ETHIOPIANS.

THE country of Ethiopia, which, in the more confined use of the name, nearly corresponds to the modern Abyssinia, was, at a very remote period, inhabited by a people, whose opinions and customs nearly resembled those of the Egyptians. Many of their divinities were the same; they had the same orders of priesthood, and religious ceremonies; they made use of the same characters in writing; their mode of dress was similar; and the regal sceptre made use of in both countries was in the form of a plough. Whence it is evident, either that the Egyptians received their religion and learning from the Ethiopians, as Lucian asserts, or, which the antiquity and celebrity of the Egyptian nation renders much more probable, that the Ethiopians were instructed by the Egyptians. Ethiopia seems to have been colonized from Egypt, and to have received its institutions from the parent country.

Little can be advanced with certainty concerning the philosophy of the Ethiopians. Their wise men, like those of the Indians, were called Gymnosophists, from their custom of wearing little clothing. They discharged the sacred functions after the manner of the Egyptian priests; had distinct colleges, and classes of disciples; and taught their dogmas in obscure and mythological language. They were remarkable for their contempt of death.

Strabo speaks of the Southern Ethiopians as atheists; but we must understand by this character, not that they were destitute of all belief in a supreme power, but that they did not worship the same gods, or make use of the same ceremonies, with their neighbours. In another place, the same historian says, that they acknowledged two gods, one immortal and the other mortal; that the immortal god was always the same, the first cause of all things; but that the mortal god was uncertain, and without a name. Perhaps this mortal god was the principle of evil, which the Egyptians acknowledged under the name of Typhon, who, being at length to be overcome by the good principle, might properly be said to be mortal. However this be, it is certain, that the Ethiopians were scrupulously exact in their religious worship, and therefore could by no means deserve the charge of atheism.

Luncian ascribes the invention of astronomy and astrology to the Ethiopians. But it is not probable, that the observation and knowledge of the celestial phenomena were originally confined to any one country. The Babylonians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, and other nations, who, from their climate and manner of life, had frequent occasion to observe the motions of the stars, may be supposed, independently of each other, to have made many discoveries respecting the celestial phenomena. But, tho' there is no sufficient reason for ascribing to the Ethiopians the exclusive honour of inventing astronomy, the story of Atlas makes it probable, that this science was early studied among them. The fable of his bearing the heavens upon his shoulders, perhaps only means, that Atlas was a diligent observer of the heavenly bodies, and taught his countrymen astronomy. He is said to have had seven daughters, called the Pleiades, who (perhaps because they had pursued the study of astronomy under their father) were advanced to an honourable station in the heavens, and gave name to a well-known constellation. His residence was probably near those lofty mountains, which to this day bear the name of Atlas.

Many other particulars are related, concerning the philosophy of the Ethiopians, by Philostratus, in his life of Apollonius Tyanæus; but this, as we shall afterwards see, is a work, on many accounts, of doubtful credit.

The morality of the Ethiopians, according to Laertius, consisted in worshipping the gods, doing no evil, exercising fortitude, and despising death.

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